



**STATE OF VERMONT
Department of Education
120 State Street
Montpelier, VT 05620-2501**

**VERMONT STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION
Capitol Plaza Conference Center, Montpelier Room, 100 State Street, Montpelier
February 19, 2008**

The State Board of Education shall sustain a vision of high skills, creative thinking, and love of knowledge and learning for every student by setting education policy that ensures student achievement in a safe and healthy learning environment.

Approved Minutes - February 19, 2008

Present: Board Members: Tom James, Chair; Ruth Stokes, Vice-chair; Brian Vachon; Fayneese Miller; Jessica Bullock; Tess Savage; Chris Robbins; Bill Corrow; Susan Schill; Kathy Larsen

DOE: Commissioner Richard Cate; Mark Oettinger; Carol King; Kerry Garber, Tina Muncy, Maureen Start; Carol Duley, David White; Kay Charron; Bill Romond; Karin Edwards; Gail Taylor; Marty Gephart; Charles Johnson; Doug Dows; Lindsay Townsend; Ken Remsen; Peter Drescher; Pat Fitzsimmons

Others: Sherry Gile, VT- NEA; Carlene Riccelli, The College Board; Charles Parmalee, ACT; Dwight Davis, VISA; Retta Dunlap, VBE; Greg Young, RI educator – observer; Alan Weiss, educator; Marylou Wells, Plainfield; Michelle McFadden, East Montpelier, Gayle Ottman, Hartford Area Chamber of Commerce; Weston Cate, Sr., Calais; Paul Cate, Calais; Judy Gendron, Berlin; Amy Holt, parent, Plainfield; Teri Geney, parent/PTA, Grand Isle; Brian Howe, VSBPE, Bud Meyers, UVM; Bruce Richardson, VSBPE; Josie Davis, UVM; Dolly Corkins, VSBPE; Judith Aiken, UVM; Charles Rathbone, VCTE/UVM; Ellen Morris, UVM; Bill Wilson, SMC; Marilyn Richardson, public; Carol Vallet, UVM; Melody Burkins, UVM; Susan Yesalonia, Norwich U; Jacqueline Murphy, SMC; Janet Steward, VSBPE; Joe Mark, CSC; Honoree Fleming, CSC; Fran Voigt; NECI; Gina Ritscher-Winders, VCTE/JSC; Diane Byrne, VCTE/Norwich; Ben Williams, VCTE/Goddard; Claudine Bedell, SMC; Marion Anastasia, Beth Cobb, Jeremy Ross, Jodie Elliott, St. Johnsbury School; Jonathan Miller-Lane, VCTE/Middlebury; Sue Rowley, Champlain College; Amy Grillo Angell, TUI; Russ Agne, VCTE/UVM; Regina Tooun, UVM; Keren Meyer; UVM; Chris Lucier, UVM; Mike Van Dyke, VTC; Carol Moore, LC; Karin Wilks, VSC; Jill Tarule, UVM; Mara Saule, UVM

Preliminaries

Item A: Call to Order, Pledge of Allegiance

Tom James, Chair, called the meeting to order at 8:53 a.m. He explained that normally he would lead the group in the Pledge of Allegiance, but since there was no flag, that would be skipped today.

Item B: Roll Call and Introductions

Chair James and Board members introduced themselves, as did others in attendance.

Discussion Item

Item C: Desired State Discussion with Business and Community Representatives, Department of Education staff (Board Members, Richard Cate)

Document(s): *How Are the Children? A Step toward the Transformation of Education in Vermont*

Discussion: Members of the department's leadership team acted as facilitators during this roundtable discussion. Fifteen business and community members from around the state, joined by department of education staff participated. Topics addressed included:

- *As you envision a transformed education system, what current educational practices should be included that best serve the needs of students?*
- *What new educational practices should be included?*
- *What questions, issues, suggestions does the document, **How are the Children?...** raise for you that you would want the State Board to be mindful of in its public policy role and as it moves forward toward next steps in this process?*

Comments from the discussion will be posted on the Department's Web site at http://education.vermont.gov/new/html/dept/future_of_education.html.

At 11:20 a.m. Chair James reconvened the meeting, noting that the discussion was very worthwhile.

Item D: Public to be Heard

There were no comments from the public at this time.

Item E: Announcements, Board Member Updates

Kathy Larsen noted that she had viewed the video of the January meeting. She offered that she has information on the Responsive Classroom process and is willing to share this with anyone interested.

Brian Vachon commented that he has been appointed as member of NASBE's Middle Level Study group, and had attended the first meeting in January. He relayed that he was somewhat baffled by the "edu-speak" and had given that feedback to the group.

Chair James requested that the Board discuss the proposed senate education committee bill, which would eliminate the department of education and institute an agency of education, have the governor appoint a secretary of education and relieve the state board of education of its powers and duties. Noting Corrow's caution about a premature discussion, Chair James said he had been asked to "testify" Wednesday at the Senate Education Committee and wanted the Board's input so that he could better represent the Board. Larsen requested clarification on the why this proposal was being put forth. Cate said that this is not a gubernatorial request, and that it is clear that there are members of both education committees interested in topic. When testifying on another topic, this question came up and there was the feeling that there's support for gubernatorial appointment. Corrow asked if Chair James was testifying on behalf of the Board and suggested that he needs to represent the Board and additionally, that he needs to remind committee members that the Board puts student first and ask how this would improve education for Vermont students.

Discussion points:

- Stokes commented that when the draft was first received, it appeared to be a solution in search of a problem. Implementation would take local control away from the superintendents and she was not sure where the cost savings would be. She suggested that if they would like to make changes to the cost of education, they provide the tools to do so.
- Brian Vachon thinks cost is a motivator and that this could go somewhere. He added that there are a pretty complex series of issues that the Board has not had time to discuss and this cannot really be done in a short, ten minute discussion, deserving more time than it could be given before the following day's testimony.
- Bill Corrow noted that other states use this model and it is not unique.

Chair James shared an article of interest from NASBE and added that it is important to have the state level superintendent/commissioner a non-partisan appointment. He commented that when attending conferences, common questions are: How is your commissioner chosen? How is your board determined? Cate noted that 12 of 50 are appointed by the governor. Corrow noted that the board is trying to keep education NOT political and this would change that, and that is not what the Board wants to do.

Chair James asked the Board to assume that the proposed bill has nothing to do with cost, what are your thoughts?

- Stokes supports education and decision-making remaining non-political and this doesn't really change a whole lot because we have locally-elected boards.
- Chair James needs to ask is, "What positive changes will this make for students?"
- Fayneese Miller said that if it goes in the direction proposed in this bill, it takes out the student and parent voices, and that assumes that the people involved will have the expertise needed.

- Chair James stated he will take Brian Vachon's comment into consideration and let them know that there has not been enough time to have a full discussion with the Board and give them accurate representation of the Board's opinion.

Discussion Summary

The following questions reflect the Board's discussion:

- What is the purpose?
- How does this benefit the students of Vermont? How would this improve positive outcomes for students?
- If cost is the issue, the Board does not have the tools but is willing to address the cost of education. OR If cost is the issue, the Board is willing to address the cost of education but does not have the necessary tools?
- Nationally, 12 of 50 commissioners are appointed by the Governor (NASBE).
- The Board is against a plan that makes the process political – against a plan that politicizes the education of Vermont's students. The existing board is non political.
- The proposal would remove the voice of students and parents; makes the assumption that those in control have the knowledge and expertise to be in a place of leadership

Member Updates: Chair James recently attended the Professional Standards Board meeting and will continue to do so. Vachon relayed that the Board would be undertaking the annual commissioner evaluation in April and May. Stokes shared that in the morning's discussion, someone commented that because the Board is not elected and because of how the Board is structured, there is more capacity to think out of the box and take risks.

Item F: January Monthly Report

Chair James informed the group that the monthly report has been coming out since August 2005 and it is intended to be a tool for communications from the Board. It is available on the web at: <http://education.vermont.gov/html/Board/schedule.html>. Chair James encouraged all to look at the monthly report via the Department web site to stay informed on what is going on with the Board.

Item G: Commissioner's Update

Commissioner Cate reported on the regional student meetings that he has been attending. He noted that students are as engaged in this conversation as were the student participants at the first October discussion. Students are demonstrating differences in learning styles and strategies, as evidenced by one student who loves block scheduling and one who despises it. The Commissioner concluded that these regional meetings validate everything that he has thought about. Chair James commented that we are getting closer to HOW piece of the transformation discussion.

Action Item

Item H: Consent Agenda

Document(s): Consent Agenda Items

Motion: Robbins moved, Vachon seconded, to approve consent agenda with discussion. Corrow asked to discuss the bus idling item, noting that he does not think a one-size-fits-all approach is appropriate and wondered why this issue is the responsibility of the Board and not local principals. Cate responded that the statute states that the Board is the promulgator of these rules.

1. **Minutes of January 15, 2007 SBE Meeting**
2. **Independent School Approval** (Kerry Garber; Pat Pallas Gray)
Renewal of General Independent School Approval:
Upper Valley Waldorf School, Quechee, VT (Grades K-8)
3. **Certificate of Degree Granting Authority: Albany College of Pharmacy**
(Kerry Garber, Robert Lorenz)
4. **Bus Idling Rules** (Bill Talbott, Cathy Hilgendorf)

Motion passed unanimously (9-0).

Chair James reminded those just joining the meeting to sign in and make a nametag.

At 11:52 a.m. the group recessed for lunch. Representatives of higher education joined the Board for lunch.

Jessica Bullock and Tess Savage left the meeting

Chair James called the meeting back to order at 1:03 p.m.

Discussion Items (continued)

Item I: Focus Topic: Teacher Learning Communities (TLCs); Teaching Best Practice (St. Johnsbury School District: Marian Anastasia, Principal; Beth Cobb, Jodie Elliott, Jeremy Ross, TLC Leaders)

Document(s): White Sheet

Discussion: Richard Cate shared that TLCs are one focus area of the transformation discussion. He introduced Marty Gephardt, standards and assessment team co-directors who has visited St. Johnsbury School, one of the schools involved in the formative assessment and teacher learning communities training. St Johnsbury School Principal Marian Anastasia was introduced as well as the school's TLC leaders: Jodie Elliot, Jeremy Ross and Beth Cobb.

St. Johnsbury School is in its second year of implementing the Formative Assessment Project (FAP) which is a collaboration of the department, the Educator Testing Service (ETS), and regional Education Service Agencies (ESAs). Teachers are trained in ETS' *Keeping Learning on Track* and form Teacher Learning Communities (TLC) that meet monthly to support

participating teachers in the implementation of their classroom action plan. Each TLC has a leader who is linked to other TLC leaders throughout the state through an on-line community facilitated by department staff. A TLC is made up primarily of teachers, can include principals and others, but the main focus is teachers and instructional improvement. A TLC is built on three main ideas: 1) ensuring that students learn; 2) a culture of collaboration; 3) focus on results; and the following areas need to be in place to assure successful implementation: supportive leadership, supportive structural conditions, collective challenging, questioning, team decisions on essential learning environments, interventions and enrichment. A TLC uses five strategies: 1) Questioning – discussions, questions and learning tasks; 2) Feedback – moving learners forward with feedback; 3) Sharing Learning Expectations – clarifying and sharing learning intentions and criteria for success; 4) Self-Assessment – activating students as the owners of their own learning; and, 5) Peer Assessment – using students as instructional resources and support for each other. Under each of these strategies, there are numerous techniques.

At St. Johnsbury, the TLC spans grades K-8. St. Johnsbury is a large school – with 700 students and 80 staff - and the TLC has lessened the isolation factor for teachers. TLC participants discuss teaching best practices, consider what and how students are learning, and explore deeper learning about the strategies they are using with students. This is one example of how a number of schools in Vermont are using TLCs to support improvements in learning.

It was noted that the Board has been gathering input about how to improve education and a recurring question is, “How can we improve professional development?” TLCs as embedded professional development can play a role in the effectiveness of professional development. It was questioned whether teachers have to go thru the formative assessment training before becoming part of a TLC. St. Johnsbury explained that is how their school has done it and that the most valuable piece has been the TLC and its benefits. Because they went thru the training together, they build the community of trust right from the beginning.

Susan Schill left the meeting.

Item C: Desired State Discussion with representatives from institutions of higher education (Board Members, Richard Cate)

Document(s): *How Are the Children? A Step toward the Transformation of Education in Vermont*

Discussion: Richard Cate explained to the group that the whole conversation on the future of education goes back to 1999 *High Schools on the Move* initiative, where the focus was on best practice and 9-12 education. Cate explained that he visited all the high schools in the state as well as some middle and elementary schools. Since then he has been talking to various groups of people, businesses, students, internal departmental folks, to begin a framework of what we are trying to accomplish and what the goals should be. Then “HOW do we get there” discussion will begin in March and April. Members of the department’s leadership team acted as facilitators during this roundtable discussion. Thirty-nine higher education representatives from institutions around the state participated. Topics addressed included:

- *As you envision a transformed education system, what current educational practices should be included that best serve the needs of students?*
- *What new educational practices should be included?*

- *What questions, issues, suggestions does the document, **How are the Children?...** raise for you that you would want the State Board to be mindful of in its public policy role and as it moves forward toward next steps in this process?*

The meeting was called back to order at 4:03 p.m. by Chair James.

Comments from the discussion will be posted on the Department's Web site at http://education.vermont.gov/new/html/dept/future_of_education.html.

Chair James thanked all for their participation.

Item K: Wrap Up and Future Agendas - Richard Cate, Carol King

Carol King reviewed the current list for the March meeting:

- Annual Educator Recognition Event (5:00 p.m. in the Governor's Ballroom)
- Commissioner/Legislative Updates
- *Transformation* conversation w/ constituents (Asst Supts; Curric.Coords; Sp Ed Dirs; VTSAC; VAMLE)
- Focus Topic discussion: 21st Century Skills
- RTI Comprehensive Update (Karin Edwards, SST)
- Educator Preparation Panel (Marta Cambra, EQ)
- Post Secondary Approval Rules Revisions (Lorenz)
- Consent Agenda (Minutes, construction, independent school approval)

April meeting is at Mill River and May meeting is at Burr & Burton.

August 2008 meeting dates are 8/25 and 8/26.

Brian Vachon expressed concern that there was not more interest in people from the business community. Chair James said that he talked to the Vermont Business Roundtable and that they were interested in having the Board meet with a group from their organization. It was agreed that their input and thoughts were desired and the chair and commissioner will keep trying to involve them in this discussion.

Chris Robbins asked if there were other legislative bills the Board needs to be aware of. Cate replied that he is keeping abreast of this and will keep the Board informed.

Cate shared a press release from the College Boards which reported that Vermont had the largest percentage of high school graduates who scored 3 or higher on AP exams.

Motion: Miller moved, Larsen seconded, to adjourn the February 19, 2008 State Board of Education meeting. The motion passed unanimously (7-0). Meeting adjourned at 4:33 p.m.

Item L: Written Reports

1. Report to the Legislature to Address Services for Individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorders (AHS/DOE)
2. FY 2009 Budget Book (SBE/DOE)

Minutes prepared by Carol King/Maureen Start